

Tiffany Star #28

The Official Publication of the
History of the Imperium Working Group

THUNDER FROM ABOVE

by Rob Caswell

DGP MegaTraveller Update

GEnie: 7/22/91

By the time you read this, MegaTraveller Journal #2 should be available in your local stores. Subscriptions should be arriving about now as well.

Things are coming together quicker than I expected for Journal #3. It looks like we may be able to make a late November release date with it. That will put it about two months ahead of our planned schedule.

For those of you who panicked at the news that the Journal was being released irregularly, but that we were striving for a biannual frequency: the pendulum swings both ways. Six months is the "mean" period we're targeting, but if we CAN publish it sooner, we will.

At any rate, I'm pretty pleased with the way the content's shaping up. And for those of you who are preparing to send SASE's for your DoD stats (see Journal#2's Helm Report), save your stamps! Journal#3 will be publishing them—possibly as a pull-out supplement. Other goodies include a Worldguide for Vincennes and a new alien minor race in the Domain by William H. Keith, Jr.

We've straightened out our problems with the SOLOMANI & ASLAN manuscript and are currently targeting that book for a September release. I can't wait to see that one finished myself. Visually, it should really outshine VILANI & VARGR. Not only are the illustrations more numerous, but they're being done by two of the game's best illustrators, Blair Reynolds (FLAMING EYE and DEFYING THE WOLF [MTJ#2 adventure]) doing the Solomani and Mike Vilardi (KNIGHTFALL, THE NORRIS INTERVIEW, and SNAPSHOTS OF THE OCCUPATION [MTJ#2]) doing the Aslan. Some of you who made it ORIGINS may have got the chance to see the art for the Aslan section, as it was being worked on at our booth. The cover will be by Dell Harris (MTJ#1 cover).

For those of you waiting for THE BEST OF THE TRAVELLERS' DIGEST, we've back-burnered that product until we hit (IF we hit) a lull in MTJ submissions. We'll announce that one as soon as we establish a firm date.

Delays, delays, delays...

GEnie: 7/24/91

Well, I don't like to report them any more that you like to hear them. However, it looks like, after critically assessing the state of the Solomani & Aslan manuscript, that that product won't be hitting stores until late October- early November. The set back is a result of some unforeseen editorial juggling.

Notes to TIFFANY STAR Readers

GEnie: 7/31/91

Upon reading TS#27, I wanted to respond to a couple of points—both made by Mike Mikesh. First, I applaud his efforts to get more writers to submit to MTJ. I DO need the submissions. However, his goad of the possibility of MT sharing space with A.I. is insubstantial.

I guess the precedent was set when the original JOURNAL became the multiple game supporting CHALLENGE. As a Traveller fan, I too was disappointed. However, I ASSURE you, as long as MTJ exists, it will be strictly Traveller. Supporting A.I. in that magazine is simply out of the question.

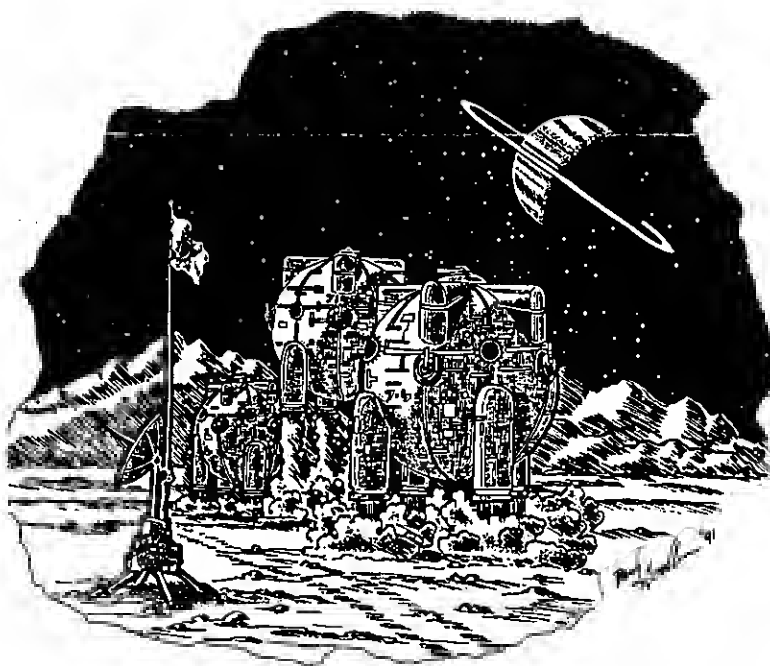
If we do start up an A.I. support periodical, it will be a separate publication. And I do not rule out DGP starting up an all new magazine in the future. However, no such plans have yet been made.

I'd also like to thank Mike for the fine article suggestions he made in his MTJ hype section. They are all good and characterize the direction the magazine is heading. As some of you may know, MTJ was designed, in part, to fill the empty shoes of DGP's previously planned BEHIND THE CLAW: THE DENEb SOURCEBOOK. Our goal is to detail the region and make it an (the most) interesting region for adventuring.

On another point, though GDW will again be forwarding the clock, with HARD TIMES, to 1125, DGP's current plans call for continuing our real-time clock (currently set in 1121). I guess that means we'll catch up in 1995. There is still A LOT of untapped adventure potential in the Rebellion era.

Lastly, I'm sorry to disappoint those involved in HIWG's logo contest, but the megacorp logos have already been executed by Blair Reynolds for our MEGACORPORATIONS IN 1121 article appearing in MTJ3.

—Rob Caswell MTJ Editor



WHAT IN THE STARS

by Mike Mikesh

MTJ Hype Section

To rephrase from last issue, Rob Caswell is in need of dynamite articles for MTJ. If things slow down, it might encourage Digest Group to redirect support, and—heaven forbid!—end the existence of MTJ.

In other DGP news, Onnesium Quest is the next MT product in line after MTJ3. Expected Onnesium Quest early 1992. Robots & Cyborgs is back-burnered for now. Work should begin again next summer, making it a 1993 product.

Challenge Special Issues

In Michelle Sturgeon's letter of 7/23/91, she listed the special issues Challenge has coming up. For those of you that want to break into print, you will probably find these make for easier opportunities to get things accepted.

<u>Deadline</u>	<u>Special Issue</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>Pub Date</u>
11/1/91	April Fools (short joke articles)/ Mysteries	59	(Apr 92)
12/1/91		60	(May)
01/1/92	Heavy Metal (large equipment)	61	(Jun)
02/1/92	(Gencon preview)	62	(Jul)
03/1/92	(Gencon issue)	63	(Aug)
04/1/92	Bestiary	64	(Sep)
05/1/92		65	(Oct)
06/1/92	Horror	66	(Nov)

An item I'd really like to see in Heavy Metal is the fusion tunnel, originally worked up by Geo Gelinis for Grand Explorations. The literature mentions it, at least in regards to the fabrication of asteroid ships. Such devices must be common in the Imperium. Considering that there are no population penalties for inhospitable worlds, it's probably pretty easy to build cities underground. Why? The fusion tunnel. These can make the old science fiction dream come true of boring through the ground with considerable ease. Transported to industrial tech and pre-stellar worlds, they can play havoc with security.

I think someone really should write up the Poni (on Scout Service emblems) for the Bestiary issue. Let me know if someone elects to do that. Otherwise, I'll probably take the time out to do it myself.

STAFF: Mike Mikesh, Ed Edwards and John Meyers.

TIFFANY STAR is a monthly amateur periodical published in support of the History of the Imperium Working Group (HIWG). The activities of HIWG are devoted to the development of the setting for Game Designers' Workshop's (GDW) science fiction role playing game of the far future, TRAVELLER. TRAVELLER is a registered trademark of GDW and is used with permission only. Portions of this periodical are derived from other TRAVELLER materials published by GDW or Digest Group Publications and are the copyright of the respective groups.

TIFFANY STAR is available to History of the Imperium Working Group members at the single issue price of \$2.00. Members automatically receive subscriptions upon the payment of dues. Annual dues for HIWG membership are \$12.00 and are payable to Ed Edwards, HIWG, 1410 E. Boyd, Norman OK 73071. Stamps accepted.

Illustrations and photo-ready articles are welcome. Send mail to Mike Mikesh, TIFFANY STAR, 3124 75th Ave. #3, Landover, MD 20785.

Shattered Imperium Column

We are going to do the Shattered Imperium column in Challenge. Remember that old idea from the end of 1989? We shifted this effort to instead support REBELLION SOURCEBOOK VOL 2 when that was announced, and kept at it after it transformed into REBEL'S TALES.

Now that RT is dead, I inquired with Michelle Sturgeon, Challenge's Managing editor, to see if she might be interested in it again. I was not confident because GDW is trying to create a density of support for Diaspora rather than scatter it over the Imperium. Michelle said check with Chuck Gannon, Challenge's MegaTraveller consultant. He talked the proposal over with Michelle. They both like it, so SI is a go again! (Thank you, Chuck.)

Articles for Shattered Imperium will take two forms. Most will be devoted to each of the factions to talk about their history to 1125, their atmosphere and adventuring. Other articles will be derived from essays we originally prepared for REBEL'S TALES.

I'll be preparing the first faction article to serve as a prototype for the rest. (The faction is again uncertain.) But you are all encouraged to start working up ideas now. That way, thoughts will be better developed once it comes time for the given article.

GDW Newsletter

HIWG is going to do the MegaTraveller newsletter for GDW, to be called IMPERIAL LINES. As it looks right now, it'll be quarterly, 8 pages, and circulated from GDW. Geo Gelinis will be chief editor.

As Geo describes in his 8/13/91 letter to James Maliszewski and myself, "Other things I would like to put into the newsletter are the occasional deck plan, perhaps one a year; equipment, but maybe not placing a single piece of equipment on a single sheet; essays on various topics; scenarios and news relating to the issue's subsector, somewhat akin to the old amber zone; maybe a cartoon; artwork; and so forth. In fact, in many ways it will be like the JOURNAL CLASSIC."

Although the newsletter probably will not be the official organ for announcing products, it will include product news. And, articles featured in the newsletter will have a nature different from those in Challenge. We shouldn't try to compete with Challenge for articles, nor can we pay anything for them.

With this in mind, I think the foremost objective should be to circulate "orphaned" official or near-official information. Examples include material prepared for products but did not get in, the complete table of sector names, official alien homeworlds, and Second Survey material.

The second most important thing is to circulate useful compilations, i.e. the Traveller Database Project (TDB). Even if this material doesn't make for good stand-alone magazine articles, it has much use. Some of the things John Meyers has circulated are excellent examples.

The third is to circulate amateur articles and essays. The newsletter might include reprints of the best articles that have appeared in fanzines, plus new material, such as vehicles from Rob Prior, and starport or alien essays from Bryan Borich.

So far, here's how Geo is thinking to arrange the posts, although this is still fluid:

Chief Editor:	Mark "Geo" Gelinis
Contributions Editor:	Mike Mikesh
Associate Editors:	John C. Meyers, Dennis Myers, ...

Moving?

If so, make sure that we get your new address before you move. That way your copy of Tiffany Star will get sent to the right address, the first time. Also, don't forget to fill out the change of address card with your Post Office. It really does help.

Paul Sanders reports another magazine Traveller writers can consider:

VORTEXT Publishing
Chris Williams
5506 Beaudry St. #C
Emeryville, CA 94608

Vortex is still new and small with an extremely limited budget. As such, they cannot offer more than a token payment for any submissions that are accepted.

HARD TIMES

We should still see HT this month (September). By this time, Chuck Gannon would have finished the last of DIASPORA and sent it in to GDW. That will probably be its full title, by the way, rather than DIASPORA SOURCEBOOK. Since a kind of "diaspora" is what is going on (peoples force into migrating as a result of the Imperial shattering), that title, DIASPORA, holds a double meaning.

A.I.

The word I hear is that this product (DGP's own science fiction RPG) is pushed back to January 1992. There is still much work to be done on it, and they want to do it right. 1992 will be a very big year for the techno-fantasy genre. The first revision of JORUNE comes out next year, and they're planning a heavy advertising blitz.



Fellow TRAVELLERS:

GENIE: 9/5/91

In 1987, only four years ago, the official word of the new-wave TRAVELLER: the Shattered Imperium, reached the streets in CHALLENGE 29 (July 87) and THE TRAVELLERS' DIGEST (Aug 87). At that time, if you had had today's headlines concerning the Soviet Union in fictional form, nobody would have noticed it. Oh, there might have been comments about the inapplicability of such a fiction, but nobody would have ever thought it might come to pass.

Meanwhile, the TRAVELLER fan, who has been dealing with the breakup of an empire for four years, hardly can read the newspaper with out a strong sense of déjà vu. Is Marc Miller some type of psychic? Or is Ed putting two and two together and coming up with a solid "six"?

New Folks around HIWG:

201 Mateen Greenway, United Kingdom
202 Anthony L. Buckley, Australia
203 Stephen Egolf, Indiana
204 Django Upton, Australia
205 Wade F. Smith, New Mexico
206 Angus Foster, Australia

Old Folks around HIWG:

Ed Edwards, 48 come 25 Sept

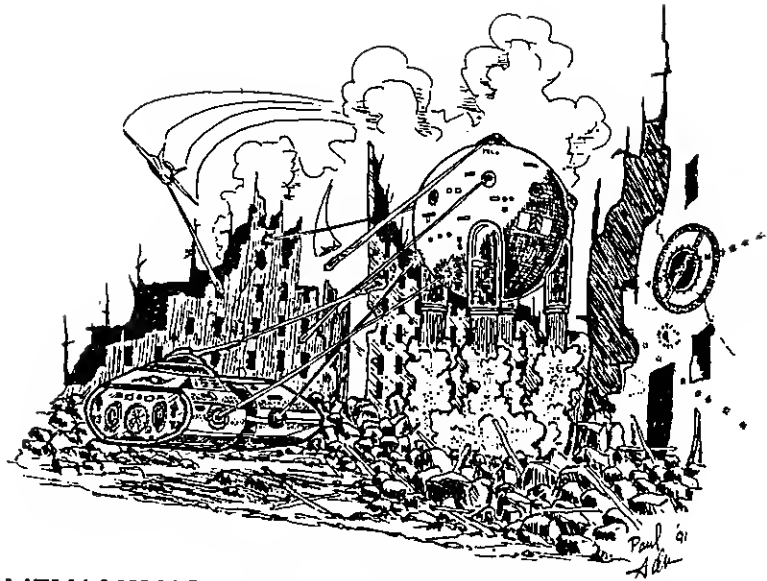
Happy Birthday, Ed!—MM

HIWG Downunder

GENIE: 7/21/91

A formation meeting for HIWG Downunder was held 13 July 1991 in Australia. David Schneider, leader of HIWG Downunder, Gustav Ness, Grant Sinclair, and Allan Prewitt where there. That is 2/3 of HIWG Downunder [as of that time—MM], so it was a major accomplishment. They did not have a long meeting but did decide to call the group "HIWG Downunder" rather than "HIWG Australia and New Zealand" (which is harder to type!).

Long Live HIWG Downunder!



NEW HIWG DOCUMENTS

HIWG Document List (HDL)
12 pages

Edited by Clay Bush, 31 July 91.
Clay has combed the Quadrant

Editor's lists of available HIWG documents and extensively updated all known lists. This comprehensive list of HIWG documents is a must for the connoisseur of exotic/unapproved TRAVELLER documents. Available from Clay for \$1.20.

Order Number: 166.08
3 pages

The Brothers of Varian—More Ideas, by David Schneider. This essay supplements HD166.04 with a further examination of this faction. This includes more ideas about who might be a BOV, some ideas about how they might operate within the factions of the Imperium, and ideas concerning some sub-organizations of the BOV. Available from Ed for \$0.45.

STARBURST 3
4 pages

By David Schneider. David, the HIWG Down- under area coordinator, produces this periodical for the HIWG Downunder group, the fastest growing segment of HIWG. Keep up with HIWG activities Downunder. Available from Ed for \$0.60.

STARBURST 4, Aug 91
4 pages

By David Schneider. Projects for HIWG Downunder; New documents from there, some BOV news; exotic drawings; ROFL (rolling on the floor, laughing) jones; and more! Available from Ed for \$0.60.

AAB Proceedings #13
12 pages

Edited by Clay Bush. Collected notes; new Paragon software; more about the Vilani; the new ESIG; Jump duration; four full pages on Naval Operations; Plankwell class battleship; and more. Order from Clay Bush for \$1.20.

AAB Proceedings #14
10 pages

Edited by Clay Bush. The Quadrant One Newsletter strikes again: updates on the O1 organizations; WORLD class battletender (300,000 tons of meanness!); much more spiffy stuff. Order from Clay Bush for \$1.

HD192.01
3 pages

Yet More Skills for MEGATRAVELLER. By B. Fuller. Concealment, Cryptography, Escapes, Holster, Surveillance, not to mention the really useful: Urban Survival! Available from Ed for \$0.45.

ON WRITING WELL

by Joe D. Fugate, Sr.

GENie: 8/18/91

I know a lot of you are wanting to break into print in the professional publications. We all think we can write reasonably well (I sure thought I could when I started DGP) but my writing was awful. I learned a lot in my association with Gary Thomas, who was a lot better writer than I was. The following is an attempt to impart what I have learned after some 6 years of writing for publication.

I just spent 7 hours rewriting two pages of Solomani historical text for Solomani and Aslan. I ran the original writing through a grammar checker and then checked the statistics.

According to the statistics, the original was equivalent in complexity and readability to a life insurance document. I worked hard to simplify the text and give it "punch." Here is the result. The new and the original versions follow in the next posting. The postings are a bit long (2-3 screens), but I think you need to see them.

If you think you are saving us a lot of work, and you don't edit and reedit your writing at least three times before you send it to us, you are not saving us any work.

Reediting this kind of dry writing is almost harder than writing it ourselves. I hate to put it that way, but it's too often true.

SUMMARY OF CHANGES MADE DURING EDITING

1. Shorter paragraphs.
2. Shorter sentences.
3. Simpler, shorter words. In the example, "sources of nourishment" becomes "food supply"
4. Active rather than passive verbs to give the writing punch. In the example, "was to provide" becomes "sought to alter"
5. Less vague wording in some cases. In the example, "adapting" became "genetically alter"

SHORT EXAMPLE: (verbs in upper case)

Before...

One of GenAssist's primary responsibilities WAS TO PROVIDE ready sources of nourishment by adapting Terran and alien lifeforms to thrive in new habitats.

After...

GenAssist first SOUGHT TO genetically ALTER Terran and alien lifeforms so that food supply was not a problem.

See the difference? Notice the new version is shorter and more interesting to read. The original sounds like a formal business memo. Can the formal writing and you will be a lot further ahead. You'll become a better writer if you write more like you TALK.

WRITER'S NOTES

Terry's following remarks pertain to Joe's comments about writing well, above. Note that Terry's tips apply primarily to newspaper journalism, although they could work well for the type of writing we do as well. —MM

Terry McInnes

GENie: 8/19/91

Way back when I worked for the Associated Press I worked for an editor who told me to: 1. Never write a sentence more than 30 words long. 2. Never write a paragraph more than three sentences long. 3. Never write a word more than three syllables long. To impress me with the last point he made me look up every word in any of my news stories that was more than three syllables long.

LONGER EXAMPLE:

SOLOMANI HISTORY (OLD)

EARLY TERRAN COLONIZATION EFFORTS

After forming an effective world government and gaining a series of relatively small military victories, the Terrans gradually became aware of the size of the Vilani Empire. The leaders in the Secretariat and the General Assembly realized that they were vastly outnumbered in both population and economic resources; therefore, if the Terrans were to compete with the Vilani in the long run, the need for the establishment of new colonies and the rapid growth of existing ones became an overwhelming concern.

The first colonies were established under the aegis of the UNSCA Office of Colonial Development, and were protected by bases of the Confederation Navy. The first concern of many of these colonies was to establish significant populations as rapidly as possible. GenAssist was formed and contracted early in these colonization efforts. One of GenAssist's primary responsibilities was to provide ready sources of nourishment by adapting Terran and alien lifeforms to thrive in new habitats. GenAssist was also charged with expanding the populations of the new colonies as rapidly as possible. Although there were many Terrans eager to sign on to new colonies, most of these sought to settle on worlds that were easily habitable. Unfortunately, most worlds are not naturally suited for human habitation, but these same worlds often contain the most valuable resources for a space-faring civilization. The Terran Confederation needed the populations to grow rapidly on such worlds in order to increase their industrial productivity. GenAssist offered a solution. Once a base had been established on a world with a hostile or semi-hostile environment, GenAssist would set up artificial womb factories capable of producing thousands of infants in a single year. Small human staffs and robot nurses would care for these budding populations. These new "test-tube" colonists would be educated according to standards set by the Office of Colonial Development by tapes operating on the subconscious mind. Within twenty years, a fully productive, loyal colony world would be established. Many worlds with Solomani populations coreward of Sol, were initially settled under these circumstances. An important side-effect of these so-called "tuber" colonies, was that their populations identified themselves as Terrans only, since they had no defined ethnic, national, or racial roots.



One reason newspapers like short paragraphs is that news stories are set in rather narrow column widths, compared with books or magazines. In this format, long paragraphs turn into massive blocs of unreadable type. In Joe's "bad" example, there was at least one example of such a type monster.

Adventure Writing Pt 1 (Mike Mikes)

Many writers from the HIWG membership are engaged in adventure writing, if not for products, then for the game magazines. The following suggestions may prove useful. If you have thoughts to add or criticisms of these ideas, your letters are welcome. I might like to include them in future issues of TS, so let me know in your letters if you would rather keep them private.

When it comes to adventures, I generally hear two, seemingly contradictory complaints, often about the same adventure. The first

EARLY TERRAN COLONIZATION

After forming a world government and gaining small victories in the early fighting with the Vilani, we Terrans gradually realized the size of the Vilani Empire. Our leaders saw the Vilani greatly outnumbered us in both population and resources. If we were to compete with the Vilani long term, we must set up new colonies in strategic locations and expand existing ones in all haste.

The UNSCA Office of Colonial Development established these new colonies and our Confederation Navy protected them with a defensible network of bases. Many colonies sought to gain populations as rapidly as possible. GenAssist, the famous Solomani genetic engineering firm, was born during these early colonization years.

GenAssist first sought to genetically alter Terran and alien lifeforms so that food supply was not a problem. Next, GenAssist sought to increase the birth and growth rates of the colonists, expanding their populations in record time. Although our ancestors were eager colonists, most sought to settle on habitable worlds. Unfortunately, most worlds were not suited for humans, but these same worlds often had the best resources for a rapidly growing interstellar civilization. Plus, we needed workers to increase our productivity.

Once again, GenAssist offered a solution. Once established on a world with a hostile environment, GenAssist set up "artificial wombs" producing thousands of infants per year. A staff of a few human and robot nurses cared for these budding populations. Others educated these new "test-tube" colonists using tapes feeding the subconscious mind. Using these techniques, we could establish a fully productive, heavily populated colony world in under twenty years.

Our ancestors settled many worlds coreward of Sol in this way. A side-effect of these so-called "tuber" colonies was their people saw themselves as Terrans only, since they lacked defined national roots.

Okay, back to the text editing!

—Joe Fugate, DGP

complaint is that the referee had to put in much extra work modifying the adventure to suit his group or campaign. Everything needed changing around. A lot—perhaps even most—of the material had to be thrown out. For the amount of work involved, it would have been better just to have had the basic idea and not even put the rest in print.

The second complaint is that the adventure is lacking in material and doesn't do enough for the referee. (Bob Grob aired his last issue, as did Rob Prior in TS25.) Many referees are in situations where they cannot work for hours creating an adventure, relying instead on stock adventures. Even though they intend to use the material as is, they soon discover that an awful lot is missing. Refs must still spend a great deal of time in preparing supplemental material to make the adventure usable at all.

Fortunately, this is not a no-win situation, but it does present a challenge.

The complaint of too little is probably the easiest of the two to satisfy by following a simple rule of thumb—do your best to save the referee drudgery, and you won't be far off. Is he going to need a map? Give him one. Is he going to need some thugs. Generate some. Other handy things are descriptions to read aloud to players, news and rumor tables, encounter tables, and a selection of grab NPCs.

The easiest way to assure you include all that the referee needs is to playtest your own adventure. The refinements that come from playtesting will bump your adventure up another grade level, so that is always a good idea.

The complaint of too much useless material is really a call for the adventure to be more generic. To do this, the adventure must revolve around an exciting situation rather than around the background or setting.

The Amber Zone adventures from JTAS provide good examples (as does LEE'S GUIDE; see "Who's Doing What"). "Critical Vector" in JTAS 20, for instance, involves an asteroid on a collision course with a populated backwater world. Only the player characters and their ship stand a chance of deflecting the rock. While it's an exciting situation, it can be played almost anywhere in Traveller space with many different slants.

On the other hand, an adventure about entering the Aslan Hierate from Ileish to secure support against Dulinor is an example of what to avoid. Yes, I'm sure this sounds like HIWG heresy. But, imagine the work involved in trying to transplant it to another location. Once stripped of the background and situational details, there might not be much of an adventure left the referee would care to use. Many HIWGs are looking to contribute to the official Traveller background using adventures as the vehicle. Without debating the merits of this, I recommend you write the adventure in a generic fashion, then add the background details. Be sure you have a meaty adventure first. Find an exciting plot that can be applied to other parts of the Imperium. Once that is assured, add the information you would like to see published.

Even when writing an adventure that is not tied to a specific location or background, that's still no assurance it would be easy to insert into a campaign. For instance, an adventure article might spend a lot of time detailing a lead-in that cannot be used by all campaigns, or make other assumptions that actually differ greatly from one campaign to another.

Spend little time on things that might vary among campaigns. Focus instead on things a ref would not likely change when adapting the adventure for his campaign, e.g. the main events and those things that are distinctive about your adventure. This is not to say that you can neglect the rest of the adventure, as I'll explain.

Most adventures are composed of key events. Just how the characters arrive at these events usually do not need a detailed step-by-step treatment. Leaving these interphases vague might suit campaign adaptability, since these are things the referee may wish to change. But doing so would give rise to complaints that the referee is again left on his own to create his own material.

Instead of being vague, you can provide the referee with material by which he could create what he needs on his own. Yes, this is putting the burden back on the referee to a degree. But if there is enough supporting material there that he can do what he must on the fly, then even those that "want everything" might find themselves even more satisfied by this.

Remember the referee is there to have fun, too. There's not much fun running an adventure like some cold computer program. Most refs derive enjoyment from being creative and able to freely interact with the players rather than being locked to a script. The ref can do this if he has inspiring supplemental ideas in front of him that he can pick up and run with to support the interphases.

In the next installment, I'll discuss in better detail ways to supplement the adventure so the ref can do more himself without being over-taxed.



WHO'S DOING WHAT

Terry McInnes

GENie: 8/19/91

Lest you think I've been idle... In the works: Glider rules (that's unpowered aircraft) for COACC. Hopefully these will be ready to submit to Challenge at the end of this week along with an adventure scenario using same.

Also, in case you haven't heard, Parts 1 and 2 of the Wet Navy series are scheduled for Challenge issues 53 and 54. Additional installments wait in the wings depending how well these do. Unfortunately, prospects for a full Wet Navy book appear dim at the moment. Should have some news about that within two to three weeks.

Terry is also heading up the ROBOTS & CYBORGS project for DGP, slated as a 1993 release. For those of impatient for its release, you may want to write me for a copy of Rob Prior's ROBOT DESIGN RULES (\$4 U.S.). This 24 page desktop publication integrates BOOK 8—ROBOTS, 101 ROBOTS, and MEGATRAVELLER REFEREE'S MANUAL.—MM

Gregory P. Lee—June 13, 1991

Greg Lee is author of LEE'S GUIDE TO INTERSTELLAR ADVENTURE VOL 1 (GameLords, 1983), a Traveller book featuring 10 exciting but generic adventures. I'm particularly pleased to have him as a member since I built an entire subsector for my first campaign around his book. More recently, he has contributed a generic adventure called "The Lottery" for the upcoming GDW MT newsletter.—MM

Perhaps it's time (finally) for "Lee's Guide 2" to come out. With the fifteenth anniversary coming up, I should put a few more adventure ideas together. In addition, I would edit generic ideas from others; after all, the larger book requires more print to fill them. As with the original "Lee's Guide", I would try to key the adventures to a specific planet or star system, and would draft them so that they could be played independently from the Rebellion background. As always, the goal would be to focus on the "puzzle box" school of writing: the players' principal reward is escaping with their hides intact.

Phil Athans

I had an enjoyable phone conversation with Phil on Sep 2, author of ONNESIUM QUEST. It's now a single 104 page book, not a trilogy. Although the characters still travel from Vland to the Antares system, it will predominantly focus on Antares Sector. OQ will include the sector data from Charles Kimball and James Maliszewski (although possibly with editorial adjustments), plus plenty of source material.

Among the highlights are the TL17 robot world, Sabmiqys, and the Antares system itself. An important ramification of a supergiant star is a jump limit many hundreds of AU in radius. Travel from the main world out to the starport is usually by high gee ramscoop! The prototype, if not the final design, was created by Scott Olson.

Nick Law—June 30, 1991

Nick has an interest in starting a special interest group (SIG) within HIWG focusing on sports within the Traveller universe (Grav Ball and the like.) Those interested in exchanging ideas can contact him at:

Nick Law
Flat 4, 12 Boyne Park
Tunbridge Wells; Kent TN4 8ET
UNITED KINGDOM

NEW VLAND SECTOR ANALYST

Mark Henderson (193) has been appointed to succeed John Duncan Law-Green (032) as Vland Sector analyst.

(Duncan is not leaving HIWG. In fact, he's the most "paid up" member in the organization with an expiration of #42!) Members wishing to contact Mark can reach him at:

Mark Henderson
41 Western Road
Winchester; Hants SO22 5AH
UNITED KINGDOM
Phone: (0962) 867340

Currently, Mark is working on several articles about the Domain of Vland and several adventures. One is a short-ish adventure called "The Trouble With Lectures" for Signal-GK fanzine. The other is a large adventure detailing a search across Vland Domain looking for pirate treasure lost during the Long Night (as yet untitled).

READER COMMENTARY

Essential Traveller

This issue, I am adding a new topic for reader comment. What is the essence of Traveller? In your reply, avoid pat answers like, "Space!". Rather, delve a bit deeper to come up with some more insightful remarks.

Perhaps a good way to start yourself off is to try a little word association. "Traveller." What impressions and images come to your mind? Grizzled Imperial Marines with high tech weapons? The thrill of trading exotic cargo? Alien worlds? The glory and pageantry of the Imperium or other interstellar governments? Then go on from there.

Some additional things you can consider are: Why does Traveller have a particular appeal for you? Why do you think it appeals to others? When gamers get together to play MegaTraveller instead of Star Wars or BattleTech, what are they looking for? What makes MT different from other science fiction RP games?

The game has the virtue of being different things to different people, so I expect to see a broad variety of answers as we explore essential Traveller. But what I ultimately hope to do is find from this the roots of Traveller's continuing popularity. Armed with this, perhaps the designers may be able to make more effective decisions regarding the types of products we see.

Chuck Gannon

Along these lines, Chuck Gannon pointed out an interesting simile among role playing games, dividing them into two rough categories, *poetry* and *prose*. Games of this first category focus on a particular atmosphere or mindset, such as Cyberpunk and Call of Cthulhu. Without its gritty feel, Cyberpunk would not be Cyberpunk. Without a sense of shadowy horror, CoC would not be CoC.

Traveller, on the other hand, falls into the set of games free of such strong ties to a particular atmosphere. You could run Traveller games with a cyberpunk feel or an atmosphere of horror. Think how easy it is to run a variation of *Aliens*. In fact, you can run settings with a safari feel, or wild west, or street cop, and so on, all without violating the bounds of the game.

Traveller in the Year 2000

Mark Henderson (HIWG UK)

As far as "will Traveller survive" is concerned, I feel that there is nothing to worry about as long as we keep buying the products and sending in our work for publication. In the few short months that I have been a member of HIWG, I have seen that the wealth of talent

in the UK alone could keep Traveller going for years. And with the talent in the States and in the rest of the world as well, Traveller is safe for a long time to come.

Mike Mikesh

As a wrap-up to "Traveller in the Year 2000", the consensus is very clear that Traveller's greatest strength is its well developed setting. Another was its ability to cover almost every aspect of science fiction in one form or another. Thanks to its ability to range through all tech levels, much more than just science fiction themes can also be included in its scope.

The rules brought a mixed reaction. The task system was much welcomed, and there was still appreciation for older elements such as the world generation system. But the craft design system took a beating for its errors, difficulty in use, and lack of examples to follow.

There was some remorse that the MT material was too widely dispersed across too many different books. An overwhelming amount of material for the background exists, much of which can only be found in out of print products.

Recommendations for Traveller's continued success were:

- 1) More supporting information on the major and minor races, and artificial beings (robots, etc).
- 2) More computer based supporting products.
- 3) More adventures. (Notably, I don't recall anyone recommending more background material.)
- 4) A combined source for all background information.
- 5) Better advertising and distribution. Ideally I would like to see a well thought out series of products on the schedule supporting a common thread (something of the sort we might see beginning with HARD TIMES.)

Feedback letters cited the Rebellion as both a strength and also as a weakness. Which is it? I think I'll open still another topic for discussion.

The Rebellion—Good or Ill?

Was the Rebellion and the shattering of the Imperium a good idea? Disregard considerations as to the new rules set, loss of the old products, and so on. Apart from the other issues brought by the advent of MegaTraveller, what do you think of the Shattered Imperium setting?

I have mixed feelings about this myself. Generally, when I'm replying to someone about this topic, I play devil's advocate, regardless of what side is being expressed. But I'll withhold my own thoughts on this for another issue or two.

INPUT WANTED: MARS

by Mike Mikesh



Way back in DRAGON #87, Marc Miller wrote a splendid article about the Moon in the Traveller universe. Impressed by this, it was not long before our campaign drifted over to the Sol system, Luna in particular.

Of late, I've been reading literature from space activists urging the government to start a manned Mars project with the ultimate goal to establish a Mars colony. That dream has already been realized as far as the Traveller universe is concerned. But the literature on Mars is scant, communicating little of the glamour and excitement I think Mars should have.

From BOOK 6—SCOUTS:

MARS F43056A-F Military Base. Colony.

In the months ahead, I would like to do an article on Mars making it a place at least as interesting as Luna. So, I'm asking folks if they have any alluring ideas to share. I'll mention some thoughts I've been kicking around so you can at least tell me if you think the direction is good or bad.

First off, I was thinking of using the worlds described in Asimov's Robot novels as a loose model. This is to say that even though Mars does not even have a million people, it could have a substantial work force, but made up of robots. Each human could therefore live a rather comfortable life. Naturally, the culture on Mars would be at odds with the Society for the Sovereignty of Man Over Machine (SSMM; see Digest #13).

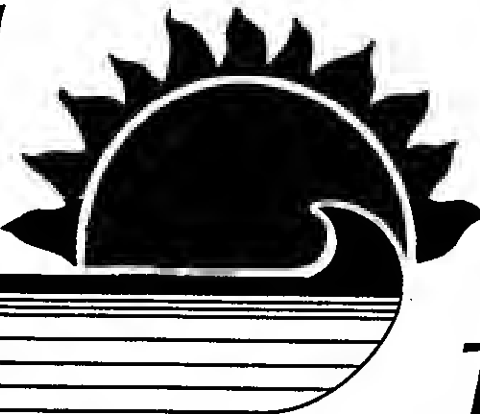
Mars does little mass production except for its own needs. Instead, its chief exports are specialized high tech items or custom designed equipment. Mars boasts its companies can make and support anything that is TL15 (and some TL16) if the customer meets their price.

The "wilds" of Mars could have some interesting things out back. For one thing, the ruins of cities are out there from before the Solomani abandoned Mars at the end of the Rule of Man. Some might be inhabited by outcasts.

Another are "Martians." In terraforming Mars, the Martian Restoration Project would have had to bring lifeforms to the planet. Rather than transplanting Terran based life, the better thing to do would be to select native lifeforms from worlds whose environments already matched the goal for Mars. From one of these, sophonts might have been recruited to work the Restoration Project. Robots have since taken over those tasks, and the society of aliens have retreated from human communities.

Other ideas?

Imperial Lines #1



Coming This Fall!

BRIGHTEST STARS OF CHARTED SPACE

by Mike Mikesh

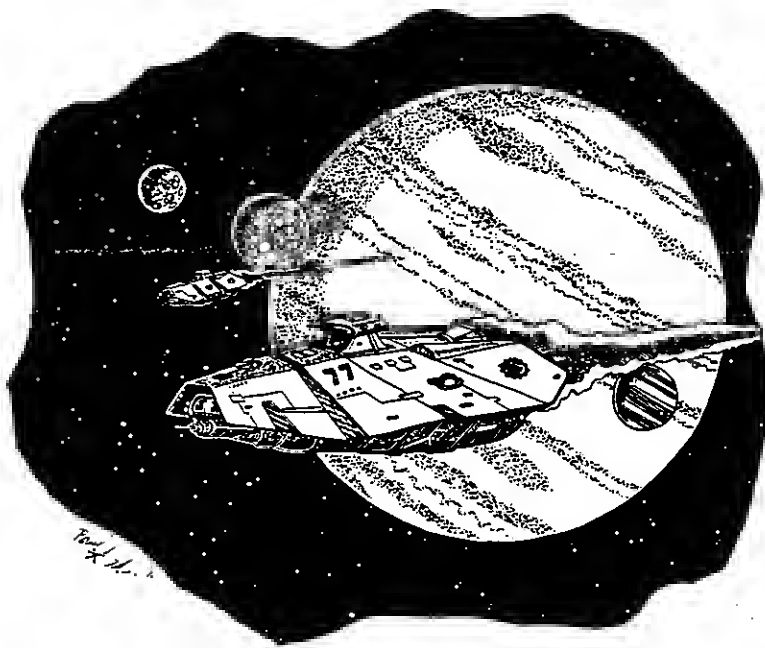
Looking at a sector map, you see dots and lines and names, sometimes printed on a black background. It brings to mind a page from a star atlas or star finder, but this is deceiving. A star atlas will show you approximate magnitudes of each star. Traveller star charts show no such information, giving no clue as to how that region of space really would look to a spacefarer's eye.

The GDW designers had good reason for doing things this way, which I won't get into here. But I could still wish the sight of at least the brighter stars not be neglected. So, I'd like to propose that someone create a simple map showing the most visually dominant stars.

- 1) On a map of the Imperium, plot all the giant and supergiant stars.
- 2) Around each of these stars, pencil a circle such that on that line, an observer would see that star as a -1.0 magnitude star.
- 3) Where two circles overlap, draw a border between them instead. On one side the one star would dominate. On the other side the other star would dominate.

This should give us an Imperial map overlaid with regions, Deneb, Antares, and Canopus probably occupying the largest. If your rendering is good enough, we could probably use it for IMPERIAL LINES. Otherwise, I can circulate it through Tiffany Star. One of the publishers might like to re-execute it for professional print.

One hangup is getting a hold of the data to collect the brightest stars, their coordinated, and their absolute magnitudes. If there's someone that would like to tackle this map, let me know and I'll find some way of getting the information.



REPORT FROM PACIFICON

By Terry McInnes

GENie: 9/01/91

If Pacificon is any indication, Traveller/MegaTraveller is undergoing a solid resurgence. When I last attended about three years ago, there was not a single T/MT adventure campaign, so I stopped going. This year there were 4 separate official T/MT campaigns run on each of two days, and the ones I played in had an overflow of non-registered players wanting to get in.

It's a very interesting experience for someone who's worked and played in the MegaTraveller product to go back to good ol' Traveller again. The Traveller combat system seems too simplistic. The ref, although he was good, didn't have too much knowledge about current Imperial history and the Rebellion.

But most of all, I sure missed the Task system. There was a case where a player had to roll 8+ successfully six times to manually revive someone in a low berth. That really cried out for one Task roll, but it couldn't be done that way. This experience has really sold me on the Task system.

REPORT ON HIWG UK

By Terry McInnes

GENie: 9/03/91

In June, Terry had occasion to be in United Kingdom, and took that opportunity to meet with folks there active in Traveller. —MM

In addition to my Wet Navy editorial sessions with Stuart Machin, I enjoyed a pub crawl and dinner meeting with Stuart, Kevin Parry, and Nick Law.

They all noted that most UK MegaTraveller/Traveller players are basically the same group of people who discovered Traveller in the 1970s and early '80s. Although the MT/T players are enthusiastic in the UK, the game is not attracting the younger players the way it first did. Seems the 12 to 20-year-olds are playing Battletech, Cyberpunk, and Star Trek.

The UK HIWGs had two suggestions to remedy this. First, there should be a simplified introductory version of MegaTraveller (MiniTraveller?) available. MT has such a massive body of rules and background that it intimidates newcomers unless they are under the tutelage of an established player. Using the vehicle/ship design rules is an especially daunting problem for new players and new referees who want to start their own campaigns.

The introductory version might well be background-less, much like the original Traveller with maybe only a few "teasers" leading to the available MegaTraveller universe materials. As players get more comfortable with the game system, they can gradually introduce background materials and additional game rules into their campaigns. Second, in some ways MegaTraveller is too bland. The combat aspects should be more violent and "gritty," not so much a space opera, and not so impersonal. (Perhaps Star Vikings will correct this.) Hard combat simulation is what attracts many new young players to Battletech, Blood Bowl, Space Marines, etc. Things like specific hit location rules and effects might help bring more players in to MegaTraveller.

Well, that's about all I can remember. The music at the Duke of Wellington heard by London University was very loud on that Friday night and it was difficult to hear. And the ale flowed freely. I think I picked up one more level of Carousing that night.

MAKE US LAUGH

Everyone likes a good joke and we are no exception. We have seen a few good ones in these pages and we would like to see more! So send us some and we'll try to print them!